Analytical Assignment #5 (Article review)

**Instructions**
This assignment has three parts, in which you will:
1. **Post to Bb a response to the prompt** – due by midnight on Tuesday, 10/25 (20 pts)
2. **Participate in a conversation in class on Wednesday, 10/26 and Friday, 10/28** (10 pts)
3. **Complete and return the attached worksheet via SafeAssign by midnight on Monday, 10/31** (70 pts)

In this assignment you are asked to read a scholarly article on a topic of myth of ancient literature relevant to our class, and to summarize and analyze it. The article is not particularly long, but it is rich with information and critical content. You will have to stretch – the article might include untranslated Greek or Latin, refer to texts we have not read, or use line numbers not analogous to our translations. You can do it!

Read the article a week or so before the final due date. Do steps 1 and 2, and then download and complete this worksheet to submit via SafeAssign by midnight on 10/31. The article is available online at JSTOR (www.jstor.org), freely accessible from any campus computer or through the KU Library’s website.

**Goals**
The goals of this assignment are many, complex, and interrelated. The assignment focuses on reading and responding to the work of others, i.e., joining an intellectual conversation and formulating and supporting an argument and putting the work of others to new uses determined by the interests of the writer. By closely reading an article and analyzing its content and organization, we hope you will gain competence at the following:
- **interrelating ideas**, identifying the limits of the readings, naming, defining, and organizing phenomena (critical terms, parts of an argument, etc.), recognizing an author’s agenda,
- appreciating the purposeful use of quotations and effective framing of the quoted materials,
- understanding effective use of footnotes, acknowledging the contingency of myth (i.e., that meaning depends on the author and audience).

This assignment relates to the following course goals as stated on the syllabus:
1) situate Greek and Roman myths in the cultural framework of the people who told them
2) compare these myths to myths from other ancient cultures, and to modern myths
3) recognize several genres of ancient literature (tragedy, epic, hymn) and read them with ease
4) discern among and evaluate competing claims or approaches to myths or to the problems they explore
5) read critical scholarly literature, identifying and assessing the shape and agenda of a scholarly argument and interrelating it to other texts/reading
6) build and articulate your own scholarly argument about an ancient myth or myths
7) understand myth’s context in and dependence on the cultural and individual who tell it

**Strategies**
You might wish to read through the worksheet questions first, then read the article AT LEAST TWICE before you turn in your final product – once before the original online post, and again before the second in-class discussion. Sketch out an outline for the article – it will help.

Do steps 1 and 2, and then download and complete this worksheet to submit via SafeAssign by midnight on 10/31. The article is available online at JSTOR (www.jstor.org), freely accessible from any campus computer or through the KU Library’s website.


**Part 1: Online**
Before midnight on Tuesday, Oct 25, please read closely (again) the scene of Pentheus’ actual death from the *Bacchae* (the messenger’s speech that begins at line 1043; the description of the death begins at line 1114) and post on Bb in your small group a response to this prompt:

Please describe the precise physical setting of Pentheus’ death. “In the woods” will not suffice. Where exactly is he? Imagine the scene as if you were viewing it through a camera lens. Next, describe – in detail – how the two protagonists look (their dress, expressions, etc.) at the moment the attack begins. This descriptive part should be 4-6 sentences.

Next, consider the fact that Pentheus’ death is narrated by a messenger, rather than presented onstage. Of course, there are practical reasons for this (the limitations of ancient stagecraft and special effects), but this choice by Euripides also adds thematic effect. How does the second-hand narration add meaning to the play? Consider not only the internal audience for the narration (the chorus of Bacchants) but also the external audience (the guests in the theater). This part of your answer should be 4-5 sentences.

**Part 2: In class**
In class on Wednesday, Oct 26, we will discuss Pentheus’ death in the play and in various artworks (which will be shown on slides) with your small group. Consider these things in your small group: How do the artworks differ from the play? What details does each painting emphasize? And what details are missing? How might those artworks function in context (why is the scene on that sort of vase, or that wall, etc.)?

We will have a second in-class discussion on Friday, Oct 28. In preparation for this discussion, you need to read the article that is associated with this assignment (given above in the general information on the assignment). In class should discuss the article’s thesis (question 3b), how authoritative this analysis is or claims to be (question 5b), and how much the interpretation depends on the ancient context of the material (question 6). Re will be leading questions on the overhead to guide your discussion. This discussion is directly relevant to the worksheet that you will turn in for part 3.

**Part 3: Turn in**
Sometime on **Monday, Oct 31**, please turn in the worksheet below via SafeAssign on Blackboard. You may omit these first two pages and turn in only the worksheet proper, if you like.

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**Worksheet:**

1. **Describe:** Please list the full bibliographic record for the article/chapter (how would you cite this article in a bibliography). Any standard format will do, but Chicago Manual of Style’s Name-Date method is easy (Author. Date. “Article title.” *Journal title*: issue number: page numbers.) (5 pts)

2. **Describe:** What portions or passages of the subject text does it cover? Please be descriptive rather than numerical. (e.g., not “Agamemnon lines 442-3” but rather “the choral ode on Helen”). (5 pts)

3a. **Describe:** What question or gap in our understanding is the author trying to answer or address? Sometimes this is explicit; sometimes it is not. (5 pts)

3b. **Describe:** What is the author’s response to this question or gap? Put otherwise, what is the article’s thesis? Please give the sentence and page number, if possible. Sometimes, again, the thesis is explicit and sometimes it is not. (5 pts)
4. Describe: How is the article organized? Or, what are the major components of the argument? What we’d like is for you to reconstruct the major outline of the article. The sub-questions will help you discover the organization. (10 pts)

- Are there section headings? If not, you might wish to look at every paragraph to see its main point, and then list the out to reconstruct an outline.
- Does the 1st paragraph or page give a “road map” of the blocks of the argument?
- Does the argument follow in order the ancient text under scrutiny? Or theme-by-theme? Or compare-contrast?
- Do all sections of the argument seem to be of equal weight, or are some more important? If the latter, where do the more important parts appear – beginning, middle, or end?
- Does the article lead up to the big ideas, or start big then taper off with proof?

5. Describe: How does the author position the argument within the world of ideas?
5a. Describe: What are the footnotes like – are they mini-essays, or just citations, or both? Please give an example. (5 pts)

5b. Does the author offer solutions, or questions? Put differently, does the author present the thesis as the, or the only, or the right idea? Or is it presented as a possible solution among many?
Find some phrases that support your observation, and give page numbers. (Some indicators of the latter approach are words such as “tension” and “ambiguity”). (5 pts)

5c. Is the author respectful toward other ideas or dismissive of them? Find an example. (5 pts)

6. Analyze: How does the author see this ancient material (text, artworks) operating in the world? Can it be best understood in the context of Greek civilization, or does its meaning transcend that context? Explain. (10 pts)

7. Describe: What conclusions does the author draw? Where does the author suggest we go next with this question? Where do you think this approach/argument might take us? (10 pts)
8. Analyze: How “portable” is the argument or method to other aspects of your study of Greek and Roman mythology? What questions or thoughts does this article raise for you about other texts or myths? (5 pts)